

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FPU

Support person present: No

1. My name is FPU. My date of birth is 1975. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

### Life before boarding school

2. Before I went to boarding school, I lived with my parents in the countryside outside , Aberdeenshire. My dad's name was and he was born in 1928. He died in 1999. My mum's name is and she was born in 1938. I am an only child. I went to a tiny primary school in the middle of nowhere. It was a normal state school called Primary School. I went there until Primary 5. There were eleven people when I went there and in my final year it was down to five. It was so tiny that it closed when I finished Primary 5. I then went to a different school called Primary School. It was also a state school in the countryside. I went there for one year until the end of Primary 6, which was the youngest age at which Merchiston would take pupils.
3. I mainly spoke to my mum about the reasons behind sending me to boarding school. My parents had both been teachers at the high school in . As an adult, my mum has told me that they were worried I'd be bullied at Academy because my parents were teachers. My mum hadn't worked there since I was born and my dad would have retired a year before I started there, so I don't totally understand it. She also thought boarding school might broaden my horizons.

4. I think going to boarding school was mainly driven by my mum. She'd been to boarding school in Perthshire herself and thought it was a good thing. Since I've become an adult, she has told me that she thought things would have been hard for me if I'd stayed at home. She thought that as I became older, my dad would have been very strict and that there would have been a lot of conflict. They were both older parents and my father was ten years older than my mother. I'm not convinced this would have been a huge problem and I'm sure we would have dealt with it. At least I would have had time with my family. I think my dad was really sad about me going to boarding school.
5. My mum lived at home for primary school and went to boarding school for secondary school. She went to a boarding school in Perthshire, which has closed now. I'm not sure what it was called. My maternal grandmother probably had borderline personality disorder. There had definitely been some kind of trauma in her background and from what I've heard, she was emotionally volatile and violent. My mum's sister told me that their mother was violent towards my mum on multiple occasions. My mum has never told me about this, but she didn't deny it. My aunt told me that my mum was physically and emotionally abused from an early age by their mother. On one occasion she smashed my mother's head against a wall and split it open with lots of blood. She punched her in the face and things like that apparently, but never sought help for her injuries.
6. It was the late forties and early fifties. My mum's family were quite well off. My maternal grandfather was a lawyer. I understand that he was relatively normal, warm and demonstrative, but absent quite a lot with work. My grandmother didn't work and they had servants at home. I don't know whether she was ever affectionate towards my mother, but if she was it would have been very unpredictable. I think that for my mum, boarding school was an escape. I imagine that it would have been consistent, predictable, and she would have felt safe. I get the impression that whatever happened to my mum at boarding school was better than what happened to her at home. I never met my grandmother. My mum broke off contact with her before I was born because, despite several warnings, she couldn't stop saying cruel things about my parents. I think all of these things influenced my mum's decision to send me to boarding school.

I also suspect that deep down she was afraid she wouldn't be a good enough mother and the school would do a better job, neither of which was the case.

7. My mum arranged the application process. I didn't visit other schools or apply to any schools other than Merchiston. I don't know why Mum chose Merchiston. I do know that she preferred single sex schools, as she thought I would achieve higher academic grades in that environment. I remember my mum showed me a prospectus of the school. It had a map of the school with a forest, a theatre and a swimming pool. I thought it looked like Disneyland. It looked exciting and different and new. I didn't have a clue.
8. I don't remember being forced to go. I also don't remember kicking and screaming and saying that I didn't want to go. If I'd said that I didn't want to go, I don't know what my mum would have said. At that time I definitely didn't understand what it meant to go away to boarding school. Basically, I was an eleven year old child. I probably thought it was what was expected of me and that it was normal, even though 99% of the people I knew were going to [REDACTED] Academy and I would have been happy to go to there. Mum had led me to believe it was normal and that it was going to happen. There was probably an element of wanting to please my parents.
9. I sat the entrance exam for Merchiston locally. It was under supervised conditions at my primary school. I can't remember much about the exam. I think there was more than one paper. I think it was a mix of verbal stuff and numerical reasoning. I'm not sure how well I did. I'm pretty sure the entrance exam was used to assess scholarship applications, but I don't think one actually had to pass a merit-based exam to get into the school.
10. I remember going to visit the school, but I can't remember whether it was before or after I took the exam. There was an interview with the headmaster and my mum was there as well. The headmaster at the time was David Spawforth. I think I was a bit nervous about the interview. It took place in the headmaster's study. Mr Spawforth walked my mum and me around the school grounds a bit first. He was friendly, but it was still a semi-formal occasion. I don't remember very much, but I think my mum was

trying to get me to behave in a certain way that would impress him. When we were walking back to his office, I caught sight of some kids riding BMX bikes to class and skidding on the gravel. I thought it looked fun and I remember my mum being horrified when the headmaster saw my excitement. He used it as a way to persuade me how much fun it would be to be a pupil there.

11. The headmaster's study was like something out of a gentlemen's club in London; leather and dark wood. He gave me a can of coke. Thinking back to my impressions of that school on that first visit is difficult. I would consider it so differently now. At the time, it was in a vacuum. I was looking at the buildings, there was a headmaster who talked to me and seemed friendly, there was a can of coke, my mum was there. It was a trip somewhere to meet somebody and talk about serious, adult things. Then we went home and that was it. There wasn't anything objectionable about it. If I'd known what I know now, I would have done things differently. I would have wanted to go to the local school. When I think about it now, the thing that gets me are the implications of what that trip meant: that was the end of my family life. For the next seven or eight years, that was it. I didn't know all that when I was eleven.

### **Merchiston Castle School, 294 Colinton Road, Edinburgh**

12. I went to Merchiston at the age of 11 and stayed there until I was 18. I think there were around 350 boys. In my year, there were around 45 boys at the beginning. There were big school grounds. The junior boarding house had a walled garden, playing fields, large gardens, and a twenty foot high brick wall surrounding the whole thing. It was very secluded and separate from the outside world and the rest of the school. The building itself was a bit like a space station with a hub and spoke configuration; lots of long corridors. It took quite a while to get from one end to the other and there were different branches going off. It was a funny kind of set up and could be quite disorienting.
13. There was the main school building, which had lots of classrooms, the dining room, the kitchens, the main offices, the staff common room and the headmaster's office.

Upstairs in the main building was the memorial hall, which was a church hall where we had morning assemblies, church services and school concerts. There was also a small medical centre in the main building, as well as a library and the senior boarding house, Evans House.

14. The senior boarding house in the main building housed boys in their final year, aged seventeen and eighteen. The boarding houses were clustered around the central school buildings. Each boarding house had a different year level so that every year you would move to a different boarding house and your living environment would change. The junior boarding house, called Pringle, was the only one which was geographically separate from the main school. It was near the entrance to the school. It housed two year levels: all the eleven and twelve year olds in forms two and three. There were day boys who came during the week and for some of the weekend. They went home at night, but still spent long days, including most evenings, at the boarding house.
15. Prefects were in their final year of school. They were allocated to and lived in each of the different boarding houses. Pringle had five or six prefects and the other boarding houses had perhaps four. I was made a Pringle prefect in my final year, but due to lack of accommodation, I was the only prefect not to live in the junior boarding house. I lived in Evans, the senior boarding house.
16. In terms of the ethos of the school, you were made aware by fairly strict discipline of what was acceptable and what wasn't. The school motto was, "Ready, Ay ready." The more I think about it, the less I know what it means. It's something about being prepared like the scouts. Rugby was venerated and held in high esteem. Certain other sports were too, but they had to be the right sports. Academic achievement was praised. This happened in the absence of any sort of family life, so all these things and the praise, or lack thereof, took on a new meaning. If we'd been going home at night, they might not have had that kind of intensity. There was a whole thing about being accepted and fitting in. It makes me feel quite sad and angry, thinking about it.



## *Staff*

17. Pringle House was a law to itself. The Chalmers (East and West) and Rogerson (East and West) boarding houses were more similar. Each boarding house had a housemaster. One housemaster would be next to the other in adjoining living quarters. If they were married, they would live there with their wives and kids. They also had an office in the boarding houses, with their living quarters through the rear door. There were people in the boarding houses called tutors. They would be teachers who weren't housemasters. They would take the load off the housemasters by helping one or two nights a week. On those nights, they would take the evening meeting, do roll calls, and get the boys off to bed.
  
18. When I was at Merchiston, the junior housemaster was James Rainy Brown. People called him "JRB". In [REDACTED] the [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] QZA [REDACTED]. He was single with no family and taught [REDACTED]. In Chalmers East, it was Doctor Gill, who had a wife and a couple of young kids. I think he taught chemistry. In Rogerson East, my housemaster was Mr Williams. He might have been an English teacher. In Rogerson West, the housemaster was Nigel Rickard. I'm not sure which subject he taught. Mr Williams and Mr Rickard both had families who lived on the premises as well. The housemaster at the senior boarding house was Stephen Horrocks, who taught French. He lived in the senior boarding house with his wife, but I'm not sure whether he had kids.
  
19. There was an area called the Cedars, which was like a little teacher village. It was one street in the school grounds with teachers' houses on either side. A lot of the teachers lived on the school grounds in those houses. The music teacher's house was next to the junior boarding house, just outside the big wall. There was another teacher who had retired years before, called B.P. I think he had been a pupil at the school and then taught at the school for decades. He was kind and relatable, and was a positive role model for me. He'd been a forward air controller in World War 2. When I was in the junior boarding house, he lived in a house that adjoined the junior boarding house, with a door that opened directly into the boarding house.

20. Throughout my time at Merchiston, the headmaster was David Spawforth. The deputy headmaster changed while I was there. Originally, it was Mr Thompson. He had been there for decades and I think he taught physics or chemistry. He looked quite old. At a certain point, there was another teacher called Mr Houston who became the deputy head. He was a rugby coach and possibly became a housemaster for a while as well. When I was almost finished at school, there was a French teacher called Stephen Horrocks, who became the senior housemaster and possibly the deputy head as well. There were normal teachers and heads of department. There were also music teachers who taught instruments and visited the school to give lessons. There was a school chaplain.

### **Routine at Merchiston**

#### *First Day*

21. I arrived at Merchiston in late September or October 1986. I remember I had a long summer break. Boarding school terms started much later than state school terms. I think I liked having a bit more time than normal. I don't know if I specifically remember the first day. I have memories of the beginning of term and very early on after I arrived. I do sort of remember being left there, but it's hard to put into words. I remember some of it as a feeling or in fragments of images, like mum and dad talking with other parents and the whole thing being a bit overwhelming and out of my control.

#### *Mornings and Bedtime*

22. The junior boarding house had some sort of Tannoy system. They would play music and wake us up with music in the morning. My friend and his dad installed the system and there were wires under all the floors and speakers. In the other boarding houses, I remember there being a bell or something. I think we got up around 7:00 and had breakfast at 7:30, 8:00 am. You could get up earlier. In the junior boarding house, there were punishment cold baths with ice. Some kids had to get up earlier for that. We had time to go for breakfast in the main building, walk back down to the junior

boarding house to get our books and then walk back up to class. Some children would have choir practice at least two mornings a week. If there was a concert coming up, the kids in the choir would go to breakfast slightly earlier than the rest of us. They would go straight to choir practice with their books and then straight to lessons.

23. In Pringle House, the dormitories were mixed between the year levels, forms two and three. There were a few eleven year olds and a few twelve year olds in the same dormitory. There were a few different dormitories and they held between five and eight or nine boys. Every term we could request to be in a certain dormitory for the next term. The housemaster would be the one who decided. There were a couple of separate dormitories which were the size of a normal bedroom. They had two single beds in them. It was seen as a privilege to be in one of those. All the other dormitories were down the other end of the house. The two-bed dormitories were near the day room and the housemaster's private quarters, where he slept and had his office.
24. After form three, you went up to Chalmers West for form four. You then moved to Chalmers East, which was for a year group called "Shell". After "Shell", you moved on to Rogerson East for form five, Rogerson West for 6B and then Evans for 6A, which was in the main building. In most of the dormitories you had a bed area. You had a single bed with a duvet colour and pillow case, which you chose. You had a bedside table where you could store things, but it wasn't locked. You had an area around the bed where you could put posters, but there were rules around the posters. As you got older, you got a desk by the bed which shielded you a bit and became part of your home. When you reached sixteen or seventeen, you got a study. You could choose a friend and there would be a bunk bed with a desk below and a bed above. I think they were dormitories that had been converted into the smaller studies.
25. After prep, there would usually be a house meeting. There would often be a roll call. There would be announcements. In the junior boarding house, I think we sometimes had a bible reading or a moralistic story of some sort. After the meeting we had a bit of time to ourselves and then we would get ready for bed. We would get into our pyjamas and brush our teeth communally in a room with a row of sinks.



26. We had a bit of time with the lights on and then a prefect or a housemaster would come round and say, "Lights off." There was a routine and we all knew what to do. People who were out of bed were told to get into bed and if they didn't they would be punished. We were allowed to talk for about twenty or thirty minutes after lights off, depending on the year-level. Some of the time, someone would come round again but we all knew the length of time we were allowed to talk for. They would say, "Silence now," and we had to be quiet. If there was talking or giggling, people might be warned or they might be punished immediately. It would sort of depend on the prefect. That was it until the morning. I don't think that I wet my bed. I'm pretty sure that I remember somebody wetting the bed in the junior years, but I don't have any more detailed memory about what happened.

#### *Mealtimes/food*

27. We ate our meals in the dining room in the main building. Some of the teachers ate with us. The kitchen staff were lovely. The food was alright. For the first three years that I was there, it wasn't the tastiest or most nutritious food. I'm pretty sure it met minimum standards. We didn't starve. For an institution, it was fine.
28. There wasn't a lot of choice when it came to the food. I remember a few nights in a row, the food was awful. If you didn't eat the food, the outcome depended on your age and what teachers were there. I have vague memories of the junior housemaster, James Rainy Brown, being very forceful, shaming people into eating things. When you were a bit older, there was more of a shrug or a grumbling of disapproval when you put your tray away. That would come from the kitchen staff or the teachers. I'm not complaining about the food, but the way they dealt with kids who didn't want to eat the food became a power struggle or a shaming experience. There were punishments for not eating the food, but I can't remember anything specific.

#### *Uniform*

29. We bought the uniform from a shop in Edinburgh so it was all identical. Our uniform was charcoal grey trousers, white shirt, school tie, charcoal grey or black socks and

black leather shoes. We wore either a tweed jacket or a blazer with the school crest on it. There was a school tie that you wore every year. That was the normal uniform that we wore to classes. The tie changed in your final year if you had done something special. I got a prefect's tie, so I was able to wear that in sixth year. The school uniform changed slightly in the final year and there was a bit more flexibility. We would wear kilts, a kilt jacket and the school tie to church services on a Sunday.

30. We a had games kit, which was also a uniform, for rugby and things like that. We had a casual uniform. When we weren't at class or in games, there was a casual dress code for the first few years that I was there. It was a blue jumper with the school crest on it and blue corduroys. There were rules about footwear as well. The first few years that I was at Merchiston, uniform was very strictly governed and you'd be punished if you didn't wear the right stuff. I think there might have been two options for the casual sweatshirt and you could wear blue or grey, but you couldn't just wear jeans or what you wanted. It's completely changed now, but there was so little space for choice when I was there.

#### *Washing and bathing*

31. The junior boarding house had a shower room with a concrete floor and showers all around the walls. There was a bath up against one wall, in the middle of the room. In all the boarding houses, you took showers in front of other boys. Usually, you weren't supervised by the adults while showering, other than in the junior boarding house where the housemaster would come in and out. There was a routine that we learned pretty quickly after arriving at the school. It was the same every day, a bit like the military.

#### *School*

32. I remember a lot of the teachers. There was Mr Hart, who taught biology. James Rainy Brown, the junior housemaster, taught chemistry. Carol Watson was my English teacher when I was eleven. <sup>FIH</sup> [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] and he also did [REDACTED] with the kids. Doctor Strannoch taught biology. Frank Hadden was the PE teacher and

coached the first XV rugby team as well. He went on to be the coach for the Scotland rugby team. Peter Arter was a maths teacher. He also taught electronics. Keith Hanson was the computing teacher.

33. Classes started at around 9:00 am. There were five different lessons before lunch and a mid-morning break of around half an hour. I don't remember the exact times, but I do have a clear memory of the daily routine. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays were long days. On those days, we had classes in the morning, lunch, then games. We played rugby from around 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm. From about 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm, we had two more classes then we went for dinner up at the main building. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, we had lessons in the morning. We did do games after lunch or we had what was called options. We could choose other activities, like a hobby or a different sport, which we did for the whole term or possibly the whole year. We could do things like electronics or music.
34. After dinner, we went back to the boarding house for prep. We would do homework in a room with a teacher or prefect supervising. The hours changed, depending on age. It finished earlier in the younger years. It was an hour in the younger years and increased to about two hours for older age groups. In the junior boarding house, we did prep in the day room but some children may have been allowed to do prep in their dormitories. When you moved up from the junior house, prep mainly took place in the classrooms in the main building.
35. We had lessons on Saturday mornings. It was pretty much identical to a weekday morning, except I think we stopped one lesson early. We finished at around 12:00 pm. At 2:00 pm, the whole school would go out and watch the first XV rugby team. If it was an away game at Watson's, the whole school would walk down to Watson's playing fields to watch. For me, the walk was the pleasant bit. Sometimes, there would be four or five double decker buses that would take the whole school to another school where the first XV were playing rugby.
36. The lessons varied a lot, depending on the teachers. The teachers were mostly male and varied in age. When I first went to Merchiston, there were only two female teachers

on the staff. That increased a bit during my time there. I got to know one of the female teachers after leaving school. I gather from her that the female teachers were quite badly bullied and treated differently by many of the male staff. On the whole, the teachers were pretty good. In some classes there was a lack of discipline and it got really out of control. There was one class in particular where that happened. The default discipline mode in the school was very old-school, very Victorian. Sometimes, questions were discouraged.

37. As you got older, you got a bit more choice over which subjects you took. You could sit Highers or A-levels. There was a bit of snobbery, that if you were clever you did A-levels. I did Highers because I couldn't decide what to do. I don't know how it compares to a normal school, but I think on the whole I got on okay. The class sizes were quite small. When you were older, doing Highers or A-levels, there might only be two or three kids in your class. The average class size would have from twenty to thirty pupils in the early years and six to eight pupils in the later years. I think overall the schooling was pretty good.
38. I did well in maths one year and I was put into the top maths set. I was totally lost. The teacher didn't teach, he just talked and presented topics for the kids, who understood the material first time. I needed more explanation and really struggled that year. I was forced to do the GCSE exam six months early. I passed it, but only just. I had been trying to tell everyone that I wanted to go down a class. My mum didn't listen and the teachers didn't listen. When I went on to Higher maths, I had a teacher who was the head of department. He was an older teacher and he was a lovely, soft-spoken man, who spent time with the pupils who still had questions or didn't get it first time. I got an A for my Higher and without him, it wouldn't have happened.
39. The pedagogy was old-fashioned and didactic, but I think it was probably pretty good for the time. I think there was a general tendency not to listen to the kids, but the classes were mostly orderly and provided an environment where one could learn. We could do physics, chemistry and biology and there were laboratory facilities where we could do experiments. In a lot of ways, it's hard to fault the academic side of school.

### *Chores*

40. There were little things that had to be done, but I don't remember a great deal about it. We had to keep our own area and locker clean and tidy. I do remember everyone cleaning the music centre at the weekend. That was a one-off, but I know there were other communal things like that sometimes. There were cleaners and kitchen staff to make the meals but we were expected to be civilised and tidy up after ourselves.

### *Pocket money*

41. Our parents gave us pocket money. I think it may have been given out by the housemasters. I think they would have kept an old-fashioned ledger. There was a termly allowance for clothing and an allowance for fun. The junior boarding house had a tuck shop selling chocolates and sweets. I'm guessing that people were given different amounts of pocket money. I think I got it weekly from the housemaster. We didn't need money for most things, except for treats or if we wanted to go out. Most of the activities were already paid for. There were trips to the cinema about once or twice a term. The money for that would have come from pocket money. We went to a cinema in Morningside. I think they always obeyed the rules about age restrictions. I remember I couldn't go and see *When Harry Met Sally* because I was too young.

### *Leisure time*

42. On weekday evenings, there was a bit more free time between things. We weren't normally allowed out of the school but there was some time on weekday afternoons, maybe a couple of times a week, when we could go down to Colinton Village. There was a newsagent, a pharmacy and a few other shops. We signed out in a book and signed in when we got back. When we were in the older year groups, there were some weekend afternoons when we were allowed to go down to the centre of Edinburgh. I think we had to get permission from the housemaster and sign out. We had maybe two or three hours and would take the bus there and back. Usually, people would walk around and look around the shops, back in the days of record shops.



43. At the weekend, we had lessons on a Saturday morning. We were then required to watch the first XV play rugby. That took us up to about 4:00 or 5:00 pm on a Saturday afternoon. We had a bit of free time afterwards. After dinner, we had a bit of free time. Sometimes, there would be a movie in the common room. We went to the Sunday service on Sunday morning, which went on until about 11:00 am.
44. James Rainy Brown was strongly religious, which affected what we could do in terms of books we could read and films we could watch in the junior boarding house. We would have a film at the weekend. One of the prefects wanted us to watch *The Life of Brian*. There was a lot of gossip at the time because we heard that we weren't allowed to watch it. Weirdly, I think we were allowed to watch some 18 rated films, so it was odd.
45. In spare time, you could go somewhere to read. You could study or go to the library. There were five tennis courts, so you could play tennis in the summer. The school grounds included a really nice forested area with tracks. You could mess around and go in there and play around with friends. There was a ruined castle on the grounds. We weren't supposed to go in there, but some of us did go in and have a look around. I used to go running in the forested area and within the school. When I was older, I went running outside the school as well. There was a running track at the back of the school which was used for athletics in the summer. You could go outside and kick a rugby ball or a football around. There were also people smoking and doing all the things they weren't supposed to do as well. The facilities were great though.
46. All the boarding houses were a little bit different, but most of them had a pool table and maybe a table tennis table. There would be a day room, which was like a recreation room with a TV. I can't remember whether we were allowed to watch that during the day, but I didn't do that much. In the junior boarding house, the housemaster was supportive of things like model-making. I painted lead miniatures and did things like that. The boarding houses had computers that were owned by the school. There were two in the junior boarding house. We could take it in turns and play games. Some kids had their own computer and monitor and would let other kids have a go. It was



before the days of the internet, so we would play games and do programming and things like that.

### *Trips and Holidays*

47. Some years, there were school trips abroad but I didn't go on any of them. My parents were teachers. I didn't go to Merchiston on a scholarship. My mum used money inherited from my grandfather. I knew these trips abroad were really expensive so I would have felt bad asking my parents. There was one trip to Canada. One of my friends went on that trip and I think it was a really good trip. There was a choir trip to Austria another year.
48. There were camping trips during term time. There might also have been some camping trips during the holidays, but I can't remember. I don't know what his background was, but the junior housemaster encouraged us to go camping. I remember going on a camping trip to a forest outside Edinburgh somewhere. The school did Duke of Edinburgh Awards, so I did a couple of years of that. That involved expeditions. When we were older, we went on outward bound trips. After finishing exams in final year, there was an outward bound trip to the Lake District. Everybody was encouraged to go on that trip. We did rock climbing and other adventurous outdoors activities.
49. There was a member of staff at the school who was an ex-Parachute Regiment, called Archie Hambling. He managed to get a hold of a four-tonne military truck for our Duke of Edinburgh's expeditions. He would drive us out into the middle of nowhere and dump us there with map and compass. It was all done safely. He would drive away and we had to navigate to way points. He had good oversight and we were all safe. He also trained the shooting team in the school, which I did as well.

### *Religious instruction*

50. On Sunday, we were forced to go to a church service in the memorial hall. We sometimes had to go on Sunday evening as well. The whole school had to go. We

would wear kilts, a kilt jacket and the school tie. We were apparently non-denominational so most people could go to the church service at the school. There were Catholics at the school. I didn't understand what was going on with them, but they were bussed down the road by mini-bus during the week. I'm assuming it was to go to Mass. I think they went to a Catholic church at the weekend as well. None of that was explained.

51. The junior housemaster was very religious. If children followed religion and expressed an interest in it, it was seen as positive. It made life a bit easier for them. I went to a Scripture Union camp when I was twelve. I called myself Christian for a year or two. The chaplain was very good with the religious side of things. If kids had religious or spiritual questions, in my experience he was kind and answered in a fairly broad-minded way.

*Pastoral care*

52. Alan Robertson was the school chaplain for at least a few years when I was at Merchiston. He also taught religious education. He had been a few years ahead of my dad in the RAF when my dad did national service. I formed a bit of a connection with him. He was a nice guy and knew about pastoral care. He was quite human and I felt I could talk to him about most things. I don't know if I spoke about criticisms of the school, but I was certainly able to talk about emotions and how I was doing. He was very approachable and made himself accessible. He told people that they could come and talk to him.
53. You didn't have parents. You had a housemaster in an office, which had office hours. We found sources of affection, or tried to, elsewhere. I had a great relationship with the cleaners and the kitchen staff. I used to get up early and spend time with them. They were what I would call normal people, who were affectionate, funny, and genuine.

*Visits/family contact*

54. There were payphones in the boarding houses, apart from in the junior boarding house. In the junior boarding house, I think you wrote down the times that you phoned and the housemaster would add it all up and charge parents for phone calls. I might be wrong, but I don't think it would have been allowed or looked upon well if you got homesick and phoned home in the middle of the night or when we were supposed to be doing other activities. In some boarding houses, we wrote our name down next to a time and in others we had to queue up to use the phone. I remember we weren't allowed to phone home when it was time to get ready for bed. Whoever was on the phone would be told to wrap it up. We could phone home evenings, weekends and whenever we didn't have to be somewhere else.
  
55. We could write letters home whenever we wanted. We had to have our own stamps. I think there was a letter box in the main school building. As far as I know, the mail was not opened or checked. If it was, I never knew about it. I never had any reason to believe that the telephones were listened in to in any of the boarding houses, except in the junior boarding house. It was in the days of the old analogue phone lines. The phone was connected to the housemaster's phone. He could pick up the handset and listen. I don't know how I know that, I just know. It was kind of known to a couple of my friends. People said you could hear a click of someone putting down the receiver.
  
56. Visits during term time varied for different children. Some parents came to the church service on a Sunday. They could take you on what was called "leave out" afterwards. You would go on leave out after church for the rest of the day, returning at 4:30 or 5:00 pm for dinner. I think my parents came down to visit once or twice a term, depending on the term. Looking back, that seems quite awful. I wonder if part of it might have been that too frequent visits were subtly discouraged because it might make it harder for children to cope emotionally with being at boarding school. I don't know if the school explicitly discouraged parents from visiting or whether my mum decided to do things that way. Looking back, it seems a bit infrequent. We did have friends in Edinburgh whom I saw occasionally, but it may only have been once a year.

57. My parents continued to live in [REDACTED] when I was at school. The school year started in September, October. I can't remember whether we had the Autumn holiday, but that term was a long term and ran up until Christmas. I think we had around three or four weeks off over Christmas. The next term lasted until Easter, when we had another three or four week holiday. The summer term lasted until June and then we had our summer holiday. I think occasionally some of the foreign students might have left at different times, but most pupils left on the same day. Either their parents would come and collect them or the school would put them on a train or plane. My dad always came and got me.

### *Healthcare*

58. There was a medical centre in the main building of the school, which was called "the san". There was a nurse who ran it most of the week and a GP who came in from Colinton village at least once a week. There were a few beds in there, possibly three or four hospital-type beds. Boys would be put there if they contracted any kind of infectious illness or medical problems that required monitoring. I was in there for a couple of days when I was fifteen or sixteen. If you got a cut or an injury or some kind of health problem, you would go to the san and the nurse would see you. You would be booked in to see the doctor if necessary. I thought the nurse and the doctor were good. The nurse was kind and the GP was professional and did the job. I went for dental check-ups during the holidays. If kids did have dental problems during the term, I'm pretty sure they would have been taken to the dentist but that never happened to me.
59. The GP gave me the wrong dose of antihistamine for hay fever. He gave me double the dose. I spent weeks dissociating and having out of body experiences. I remember walking to class with friends, worrying that my body would do something weird. I thought it was a normal stage that you went through. Years later, I discovered from my mum that I had been given the wrong dose. I think I was probably told at the time, but I have no memory of it. It was really weird. I hadn't realised it was something that shouldn't be happening and I didn't tell anyone. It was an isolated thing and it was an unfortunate medication error on the part of the GP. I don't know how long it went on

for, but it could have been a couple of months. If I'd been attending a day school and going home every night, my parents would have noticed something wasn't right and taken me to the doctor. At boarding school, I had to pretend everything was okay. I don't even know how my mum figured out what was happening.

60. On the school side of things, there was definitely a sort of old-school, post-World War 2 ethos of toughing things out and not complaining. There was a bit of a perception of illness being weakness. Depending on who the boy was, he might be believed or disbelieved if he had a health problem. I don't think the attitude to health problems in the school was very enlightened, but they did have a GP.

### *Running away*

61. When I was eleven, there was a boy in the year above me, called [REDACTED]. He was really good at rugby and he was very big and strong for his age. Something happened and he was going to be punished for something. The prefects and James Rainy Brown were involved. They were pursuing this boy. In the middle of prep, the boarding house was silent. I remember [REDACTED] running out of the fire escape at the end of one of the corridors. He was so desperate to escape that he bent the metal bar on the fire door. I think he ran off the school grounds. I don't know how he must have been feeling to do that. I don't know exactly what happened or how it happened, but I think he was a day pupil and he made it home to his parents.

### *Discipline*

62. Some of the rules were communicated by boys in the year above. If you went there at the age of eleven, like I did, there were boys in the year ahead who had already learned what was accepted and expected and what you were and weren't allowed to do. They passed it on to us in some way, directly or indirectly. You also figured it out because people were punished for certain things. There were a lot of unspoken things about what was acceptable or unacceptable. You learned the rules very quickly, mostly through fear and a desire to conform; not in a positive, touchy-feely way.

63. My memory is that we were given a school rule book, but I'm not sure. I think there was something that we got in writing, listing the official rules. We were also given a sort of calendar at the start of each term. It was a tiny, A6 printed white card and white paper booklet. I think it had dates for the whole term of rugby games and things they thought we should know about. We were definitely made aware of school rules. The junior boarding house had its own rules as well. They were different.
64. There was a whole atmosphere of there being a right thing to do and a wrong thing to do in all aspects of school life. We learned what was expected. Either you did it or you didn't do it or you pretended to do it. Whatever you did, you knew there would be consequences if you didn't do certain things. When it came to religion, there was a general all-pervasive atmosphere of being structured and ordered and being told what to do and what not to do. That was the case with a lot of school life.
65. A lot of the rules were pretty sensible, for example not being allowed off the school grounds at certain hours or most of the time for younger boys. Overall, I thought you were treated like a fifteen year old the whole time that you were at school. When you were younger, in some ways you were given more freedom than you might have been given at home. When you got to fifteen and above, it was restrictive. There were different parts to the rules. There were rules about not being allowed to run, keeping off the grass or certain areas being out of bounds. Then there was this constant sense of being just on one side of punishment and disapproval.
66. At boarding school rules and discipline pervaded your life, 24 hours a day. It wasn't just about schooling, the school was your life. In terms of issues around privacy and being able to have psychological and physical space, the rules pervaded everything. You just never got away from it. Your whole personality and who you were was always under scrutiny. It was like some nightmare, where you were at a normal day school but your day never ended.
67. Punishments could be administered by teachers, housemasters and prefects. I think the prefects could punish us in certain ways, but they also went to the housemaster, who would punish us. One of the main forms of punishment in the school was what



they called "blue paper". It was A4, blue paper that they must have bought in bulk. A teacher would punish you by telling you to give them four sides of blue paper. You had to go to the housemaster to get the blue paper. I think that was the rationale behind the colour, that you had to get it from the housemaster so he would always find out. It also meant that you couldn't just write your punishment in a class, because the paper would stand out. The blue paper could be things like lines or an essay. I think prefects could give you a blue paper and ask you to sit on a bench, but I don't know if they could do anything else. The punishments always involved the housemaster because he'd see you on the bench.

68. Most housemasters used the blue paper as punishment. They might also have asked you to do a chore or stopped privileges, like being allowed to go out. In my final year there was a new housemaster in the senior boarding house, Stephen Horrocks. On one single day, he held six or seven roll calls in one day. It was a power struggle between him and the final year kids. Pupils had been challenging his authority and this was his way of dealing with it.
69. It's hard to remember, but I think blue papers were recorded by the housemaster. There was some continuity and if you got punished with one a week for four weeks, I'm sure they kept track. I'm 99% sure that they were recorded in a book. I don't think they kept the actual blue papers. Sometimes, cruel staff or prefects ripped them up in front of you or sometimes you got to keep them. I don't know whether physical punishments were recorded.
70. In the junior boarding house, discipline was different. Things could be punished or accepted depending on the mood of the housemaster. We could be punished for leaving prep without permission or being caught out of bed at a certain time or eating in the middle of the night or during prep. There were so many things we could be punished for. They were all presented as these massive moral failings. There may have been a logic for choosing between the different punishments, but I don't know what the logic was.

71. There was a bench outside the junior housemaster's office, which he would make people sit on as a punishment. He also made people write lines or go in cold baths before breakfast. In the first year or two that I was there, James Rainy Brown had a miniature cricket bat that a former pupil had given him. He had it in a cabinet outside of his office. He used to beat boys with it, although this never happened to me. He also had a leather tawse. I don't know whether it was used when I was there, but I think it was. I heard in later years that the use of the tawse became illegal in state schools in 1986 or 1987.
72. Along with two friends, I missed a Sunday church service when I was in the junior boarding house. We didn't just miss it, we were down playing in the forest. We forgot that there was an evening service that week. They only happened about once a term. We climbed in through a prefect's window and the prefect found footprints. They found out that it was us. James Rainy Brown was absolutely furious. It was really over the top and he tried to humiliate us. We were made to stand outside the junior boarding house against a wall whenever we had any spare time. We would be there for about an hour or so every day with other boys laughing at us. It felt like this went on for more than a week, but I'm unsure. We were definitely told it would be for weeks or longer, but he stopped it. There were other punishments as well, including withdrawal of some freedoms and possibly gardening. The junior housemaster wanted to make an example of us.
73. At the time, I don't think that I really understood a lot of what was happening. Looking back and remembering what it was like, I was certainly afraid a lot of the time in the junior boarding house. I wasn't necessarily afraid of physical punishment, but I remember being afraid of his moods, principally anger. James Rainy Brown could be very emotionally dysregulated. Some days, he would be fine but other days he would just be very severe and punitive. He would shout or be very cold. I remember being very afraid of stepping out of line and never quite knowing where the line was with him. Most other teachers were predictable and often fair. With James Rainy Brown, his rule system and the way he interacted with boys was arbitrary and mood-dependent. There were kids that a lot of us thought were his favourites. I don't know what their experience of James Rainy Brown was. I don't know whether they liked him or whether it was a

survival strategy. I suspect that a lot of the children experienced anxiety much of the time. We were very conscious of how we behaved and how we spoke. We were conscious of the volume of our voice and the content of what we said.

74. When I was twelve years old, the junior housemaster wouldn't let me wear black jeans. It became an issue because my mum had bought me a pair. James Rainy Brown said I couldn't wear them. My mum asked him why I couldn't wear them and he said it was because it reminded him of the Blackshirts of Mussolini. He wasn't even born when the Second World War took place. When I was a prefect, there were certain things I wasn't allowed to wear because he didn't like them.

### **Abuse at Merchiston**

#### *James Rainy Brown*

75. James Rainy Brown was about five foot ten. He had short brown hair and bat ears. He was thin and wore glasses. He usually wore Jesus sandals, dressed formally and wore a cardigan or a jacket or blazer. His demeanour was pre-World War Two, even though he would only have been in his mid to late forties. He always acted like he was from several generations previous to his own.
76. There was an Old Testament style wrath in the junior boarding house. It wouldn't have been the way it was without James Rainy Brown. He really made it what it was; good and bad. There was a particular tone or emotional attitude that he had which created a certain atmosphere that kept us on our toes. He would beat boys with a miniature cricket bat that he kept in a cabinet outside his office. I don't know how often that happened, but it wasn't as if it was every day. He also had a leather tawse.
77. The beatings never happened to me, but they did happen to my friends. I remember people being beaten for play-fighting or fighting. When James Rainy Brown beat boys, I gather that they had to go to his study, pull down their trousers and pants, lean over the table and he would hit them with the cricket bat a few times. They would come

back crying. One of my friends couldn't even talk to anybody afterwards because he was so upset. I don't remember any other teachers physically punishing children in that sort of way when I was at Merchiston.

78. There were also cold baths in the junior boarding house. I don't know how James Rainy Brown decided to give boys a cold bath or how one punishment was chosen over another. You would be told you were getting a cold bath and then you had to get up early the next morning. I'm not sure what time it was, but it was 6:15 or 6:30 am and nobody else was up. You'd go through to the area with the showers and the bath in the middle. The housemaster would fill the bath with water and I'm pretty sure there was ice in the bath as well. It was really cold. My memory is that there were two other boys there and we were completely naked. I think the housemaster was wearing swimming trunks. He told us to get into the bath. You had to get in and go completely under, at least to your neck and possibly totally submerged. The housemaster would be telling you to do it properly. You had to stay in until he told you to come out.
79. A friend of mine, CCB, has come forward to the Inquiry and provided a statement. I didn't realise, but for him the baths created long-term traumatic memories. He told me he panicked and tried to get out and the housemaster made him stay in. It might sound like a minor thing, but when he describes it to me now, as an adult working in mental health, it sounds like a panic attack and the lack of understanding or compassion by the housemaster was inexcusable.
80. I was punished with the cold baths a couple of times. I don't remember what I was being punished for. I then volunteered to do them for a while along with a friend. We probably did it to annoy the housemaster. The friend and I would get up every morning and go and do the cold baths. At the time, we thought of it as fun. I don't know whether it was an anti-authority thing or a way to assert control when we felt a complete lack of control. I think it was a way of coping. For the few years that I was there, the cold baths were something that happened in the junior boarding house on a regular basis. I think that they took place at least once a week.

81. The junior housemaster was a mix of "Boys Own" adventure leader and difficult-to-deal with authority figure. He took us camping and did some good things, but it was a real mix. I wasn't sexually abused at the school. I had my experience and that's that. There were some things that, looking back, I think were quite inappropriate, including inappropriate behaviour. One of the reasons that I decided to come forward to the Inquiry was because I understood that there were people giving evidence about more things happening to them. If anything that I know can help in terms of supporting information, I felt strongly that I should speak up.
82. James Rainy Brown had a habit of being scantily dressed among the young boys. I think it happened during the cold baths. It definitely happened after rugby training. Every year at Halloween, ducking for apples, we would come back in from playing rugby. We'd be in the showers and he would come in dressed in his Speedos, Jesus sandals and nothing else. He would get one of the boys to fill the bath and pour a bucket of apples into it. All the boys would be down on all fours, completely naked, and he would be standing back, watching.
83. I believe James Rainy Brown was sexually attracted to children. Personally, I don't have much doubt in my mind about that. What I don't know is whether he ever crossed the line and did something to a boy. I've also wondered about the two dormitories with two boys in them. That was something that as a pupil was very desirable. Looking back now, I see it slightly differently. The boys who were in those dormitories were very isolated. I was in one of them for one term. I didn't see anything inappropriate, but I have wondered about it. I have no doubt he was somebody who shouldn't have been teaching at a school with young boys.
84. James Rainy Brown was a pupil at the school. He went off and did a degree in chemistry at the University of Edinburgh. Immediately afterwards, he was then accepted back at the school as a teacher. He was at the school for the rest of his life. He was not a well-adjusted man. I have strong negative memories of him in some ways, but also I have good memories of him taking us camping and hiking. If there was anything about the whole school experience which gave me a bad feeling, however, it was to do with James Rainy Brown and the junior boarding house. There



was just something about the way he had set it up. I don't know whether there were clear instances of sexual abuse, but it wouldn't surprise me if there were.

FIH

85. FIH was an teacher. When I was about fourteen years old, he had been off on leave and returned. I was in his class that year. At the end of the class, he asked me to come to his study at a certain time that day. He said something like he had a present for me. I went to what I think as his bedroom in Rogerson West, although it could just have been a study. He was a tutor in the boarding house, and I think slept there at least some of the time. He closed the door so there was just the two of us in the small room. He said that he had a present for me and that he'd thought of me when he was on leave. He took out a little box with something wrapped in paper. He told me to open it. It was a pottery mushroom. He said something like I was a space cadet and he'd thought of me and got the mushroom for me.
86. It could have been something completely innocent. The reason that I'm mentioning it is knowing what I know now and being older, in case it wasn't innocent and formed part of a pattern of inappropriate or grooming behaviour that involved other children, I want it to be recorded. I'm not aware of him giving gifts to any other boys. I thought it was him being nice and kind of flattering, but it also struck me as odd and made me feel uncomfortable. It just struck me as possibly being inappropriate. I told a few friends about it and they thought it was really weird.

Mr<sup>QPD</sup>

87. When I was eleven, myself and my friend were late for a class. We probably weren't even that late, just a few minutes. The teacher's name was Mr<sup>QPD</sup>, possibly <sup>QPD</sup>. He held my friend up against the blackboard by his neck, his feet off the ground, in front of the rest of the class. I don't know why he did it, but he had clearly lost control of his anger. My friend was eleven years old and not very tall. The teacher was a rugby player, over six foot tall. He held my friend at least a foot off the ground against the blackboard. I don't know how long he held him there, but it could have



been thirty to sixty seconds. I don't think my friend said anything because my memory is that he couldn't breathe. Things just went back to the [REDACTED] class afterwards. I was too afraid to say anything I only saw Mr [REDACTED] act like that on one occasion. The friend who was lifted up by the teacher was [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

### *Bullying*

88. Fagging may have existed the first year that I was there, but it wasn't really much of a thing when I was at the school. There was bullying at Merchiston. It was all through the school. In the junior boarding house, there were two year groups, so you could be bullied by the year above. The new boys were bullied about missing home by the kids who had been at the school for a year already. A friend of mine was bullied because he was homesick and crying at night. There were kids who were strung up by their underpants on coat hooks. There were wedgies, which was someone ripping a boy's underpants out. Those things were usually done by boys of the same age, but I do have a vague memory of a prefect doing it as well.
89. The boarding houses were separate so there was bullying within the year group as well. There was all sorts of homophobic bullying, without knowing anything about the boy's sexuality. Some kids got it a lot worse than others. I remember a boy who was in his final year when I was eleven or twelve. I think his name was [REDACTED] CCY [REDACTED]. I don't know whether he was gay, but kids his own age bullied him very badly about being gay and having AIDS. On one occasion, I remember waiting outside the dining hall for dinner. A few kids his age, who seemed like adults to me, piled onto him verbally with all this stuff. Some of the younger kids joined in.
90. My friend [REDACTED] CCB [REDACTED] was really badly bullied throughout school. He was bullied about being gay and looking at peoples penises in the showers. On one level, that seems laughable and might sound humorous. He was short and he wasn't a rugby player. He was just a quiet, introverted kid, who was smart and just wanted to be left alone. There was just no escape. He was bullied by some of the rugby players and some other people. It was really awful. I think that some teachers would have been aware of him

being bullied. I think they may have seen parts of it, but I don't know of any action being taken. I don't think the junior housemaster took any action and I wasn't aware of any action being taken later in the senior school. There certainly wasn't any effective response.

91. When I was twelve, I was in another part of the school with my friend, [REDACTED]. There were these two older boys there. For no reason at all, one of them got my friend's nose between two fingers, squeezed it and twisted it really hard. He ended up with a blood blister on his nose.
92. I was bullied quite a lot. I don't have specific memories of physical bullying, it's all very vague, but I do remember frequent verbal bullying. I was an easy target at that age. I was an only child and I didn't want to hurt anybody else or be hurt by anybody else. I didn't have a clue about avoiding being an easy target. I know it's not the victim's fault, but I think there are ways you can make yourself a hard target. I felt like I had no control over it. It was upsetting at the time because I was in a new place that was unfamiliar. It was humiliating because things often happened in front of other people or when I was on my own. I was in a new environment, trying to fit in and just live. Later I verbally bullied some other kids myself, which I'm ashamed of.
93. I was bullied in the first couple of years and maybe a bit after that. When I was seventeen and a prefect, another boy, who until recently had been a friend, threatened to come into my room in the middle of the night and beat me up. I put furniture against the door for a few days, possibly longer. The main ringleader involved was quite unpredictable and I didn't know what he was capable of. His name was [REDACTED]. It never came to what I was afraid it would come to.
94. My best friend, who had been my best friend since the age of eleven, decided that he hated me when we were sixteen. He was part of the group that threatened to come into my room at night. When he left school, he went on to study medicine. I heard that he took illicit drugs and was racially abused, possibly assaulted, so I don't know what was going on with him. I also heard rumours that the ringleader, [REDACTED], was convicted

of rape or raped somebody. He was a troubled guy whose parents were in the Middle East. I think he had his own emotional problems going on when we were at school.

95. You were in this environment constantly, 24 hours a day. Although you could phone home, things could happen in the boarding school and parents would never know. You were really separated from the normal world. Although there were phones, there was a sense that you were cut off. The teachers were called masters. There was a sense that they had complete power over you, especially the housemasters and especially in the junior boarding house. It was separated geographically and the housemaster was quite unpredictable.

### **Reporting of abuse at Merchiston**

96. I don't know what the school's official take on bullying was at the time. It was almost like a double standard. We knew that bullying wasn't approved of and we weren't supposed to bully people. At the same time, if people did go and tell the powers that be about the bullying, I don't know exactly what would happen. My memory was that asking for help would have been seen in a negative light and I suspect the response would have been to toughen up. The school response was often ineffective.
97. When my friend, [REDACTED], was assaulted by an older boy, the junior housemaster, James Rainy Brown, saw the blood blister and asked what it was. [REDACTED] told him what had happened and the housemaster asked for names. I believe the boys responsible were actually punished. I don't think those boys did anything to my friend again so on that occasion, something effective was done.
98. I kept things to myself when it came to bullying. I don't think I would have talked to my parents about it. I'd been badly bullied, physically and mentally, throughout primary school and my mum hadn't really been able to stop it. I don't think I had confidence that it was going to be helpful to talk to somebody older. I felt like I was on my own with it. I don't think I ever talked to the chaplain about it. I did talk to the chaplain, Alan Robertson, when I was a bit older. When I was fifteen, sixteen I wasn't very happy. I

went to talk to the chaplain and talked to him about that, but not about bullying. I don't know if other students would have seen the chaplain as somebody to talk to or not. It might have been a bit different for me because I had been a Christian for a couple of years and I didn't hate that side of it. Maybe the connection with my dad made a difference too, although I'm not sure that I knew about that when I was at school.

99. I don't think that most kids would have followed that path and spoken to the chaplain if they had been bullied. They might have told their housemaster. I don't know whether they would have told their parents. It's hard to explain, but it was seen as the victim's fault. People never got together and shamed the bully. It was always that the bullies were kind of in the right and they got away with it. Because it was 24/7, it never stopped. It could happen in the middle of the night. There was a mentality of not snitching and not telling anybody. That was really dominant. I think that would have been at the forefront of people's minds more than who they could tell.

### **Leaving Merchiston**

100. I think I felt quite glad to be moving on from Merchiston. I probably had mixed feelings. The school did try to prepare us for moving on, academically. There was also career counselling. They let us have a bit more freedom in the upper years, such as being able to go to the city centre more often. There was an outward bound course in the Lake District after the exams. The whole experience of having lived in a boarding school for seven years meant there was quite a lot of institutionalisation. There were many aspects inherent in the boarding school experience, which fostered dependency, discouraged independent thought, and this did the opposite of preparing boys for life afterwards.
101. When I left, I felt like I was being released into normal life, having control over my time and being able to do things without arbitrary rules. Boarding school raised me in a certain way but I wouldn't say it prepared me for normal life. I think it taught me how to get away with things and do things sneakily. It also taught me (by counter-example) a bit about what I really value in life as well, such as genuineness. I do feel like it did

damage to my ability to function in the real world. Boarding school was such an unnatural situation that the real world was always going to be a bit of a shock.

### **Life after leaving boarding school**

102. I went to Edinburgh University and completed a degree. I travelled for a bit and worked before going back to do a Masters in a technical subject. I worked for a few years and worked abroad before going back to university in my late twenties to study medicine. I did specialty training and now live abroad. I got married about four years ago and I now have a daughter.
103. I've been back to visit Merchiston on two occasions since leaving. The first time would have been around 1998, 1999. The second time was about five or six years ago, shortly after James Rainy Brown had committed suicide within hours of the police visiting the school to investigate allegations of inappropriate behaviour by him. It was a weird environment at the time, with that having just happened, and the boys were being told by the school not to speak with journalists.

### **Impact**

104. I don't think the impact of being at boarding school was all bad. I gained the ability to compartmentalise my emotions, to disconnect at will. For some areas of life, that can be really useful. I am able to put up with a lot of discomfort. Most people's view of boarding school is that it's a bunch of spoilt little brats, but it's an institution. For me it cultivated a certain amount of grit. On the one hand, it has been useful because I can stay calm in emergency situations or deal with blood and trauma. On the other hand, it wasn't something that I had control over and that I could switch off.
105. It was this Victorian, pseudo-military style thing. It wasn't all bad, which is one of the confusing things. I would never send my kids to boarding school, but I have really



mixed feelings about all of this. I've been back to visit. I read the school newsletter for ex-pupils. However, I feel like an outsider. I have very confused feelings about it.

106. One of the aims of boarding school is that it's supposed to make you independent. I think it's a bit laughable, given the lack of choice and the lack of control, that anybody would think it was going to cultivate independence.
107. I've reacted a lot against the social class thing. There was a lot of snobbery at the school. It wasn't how I was brought up and I've always disagreed with that, the idea that some people are better than other people. Not everybody at the school believed that, but I think that a lot of the boys thought that way. It was fostered a bit by the school ethos, that it was such an amazing school and it was all very special. For years I reacted against that and I didn't want to be part of anything that was vaguely establishment.
108. I don't think boarding school helped my ability to stay in one place. When you go to boarding school, everybody goes away in the holidays. You don't have roots. At the end of the final year, when everybody leaves, there is no common point to come back to. It's not like going to your local high school when friends might come back home for the holidays and you might bump into people you know, or some might stay and work in the town where you grew up. Everybody that I knew left for different places. There were people who stayed in Edinburgh, like I did, but there were best friends who went all over the UK, to Canada, the USA and the Middle East. There were kids at the school from North America and the Middle East.
109. Looking back, it was like this kind of community that was created for the duration of the time that you were there. There was the school song and the rules. There are definite similarities with the military. You leave and people get lost. They lose a part of their identity and the repository of stories and knowledge disintegrates. It just disappeared into the air. I felt like I didn't have any roots. My family home and the place that I grew up in until I was eleven hadn't been my family home since I was eleven, apart from in the holidays. In the holidays you knew that after three or four weeks, you had to go back to the boarding school. I hadn't really spent a lot of time



thinking about it until I started to have girlfriends, and later my wife, who had gone to state schools and lived with their families. You then realise how unusual and unnatural it is.

110. I feel that my relationship with my parents and my childhood were cut short. There were these little interludes in the holidays, but you had to grow up pretty quickly in an institution where you were bullied for being anything other than a fully-formed adult. It's had a big impact on my self-confidence over the years and my ability to feel comfortable in my own skin. My self-esteem is not great. There have been a lot of times when I haven't liked myself very much or felt that I'm not good at things. I'm not completely blaming boarding school for that, but it definitely didn't help. My wife said I wasn't really raised; I was raised by an institution. I'd never really thought of it that way, but I wasn't really parented beyond the age of eleven; I was supervised or managed. I was parented in the holidays, but the rest of the time it was kind of like an eternal army boot camp.
111. I feel like I lost out on a lot of time with my father. He died a few years after I left school in 1993. There are multiple reasons why I wouldn't send any of my kids to boarding school, but one of the biggest comes from my experiences of missing out on seven years with my parents. My dad died when I was at university. I feel that I lost valuable years learning from and spending time with my parents. I was never able to have an adult relationship with my father. It was very different, only being home for the holidays. I think my dad was a bit heartbroken about the whole thing. He actually cried a couple of times when I left with mum in the car to go back to school at the end of the holidays.
112. I can't talk to my mum about my experiences. I haven't told her that I'm talking to the Inquiry. She feels she did the right thing. I believe that she did the best she could. I genuinely believe that she thought sending me to boarding school was the right thing to do. I don't think it was, but she can't hear that. When I've tried to talk to her about it, she becomes agitated and I don't want to upset her. I think my relationship with my mum has improved over the years in spite of going to boarding school.

113. I moved abroad and found out that you could get weekly therapy on the equivalent of the National Health Service. I went to therapy for about three years, twice a week for a while and then once a week. I wasn't in a mental health crisis, but having said that I had moved country. There was a reason I went to therapy. I was a little into my training in working in mental health. I'm doing therapy now as a patient as part of some further training. I honestly think that if it hadn't been for the therapy, I don't know if I'd be married and have a kid and be living in this country. My marriage and my child are the best things in my life.
114. Being at boarding school didn't do wonders for the relationships I've had. I think it destroyed my ability to have any sort of emotional intimacy with people. In the literature, they talk about the idea of the pseudo-self, a split in your sense of self. There's the side that you present to the outside world that's acceptable and there's the inner core, that you keep secret and safe, full of shame. My direct personal experience is hard to put into words, but I have realised at a certain point that I go through the motions. I'm very socially adept, but really, in terms of what I would call close human connection, being at boarding school kind of destroyed it. It wasn't there. In boarding school, you had these warm connections with kids your age, but you didn't have it with the adults. You had it with your parents, but then you weren't with them. It was this weird mix of these amazing facilities and emotional deprivation.

### **Reporting of abuse**

115. About five years ago, James Rainy Brown killed himself at home. Someone from the school told me what happened. The police went to him a month or so before his suicide. They told him that there had been allegations of inappropriate behaviour by a former pupil. The story I heard was that the police came to the school on the day of his suicide to talk to the headmaster about the allegations. He lived very near the school and went home. Within two hours, he'd committed suicide in his house. From what I know, the pupil who made the allegations would either have been in my year or the year above. I don't know anything further about the allegations or what was meant by inappropriate.

## **Records**


116. I don't have what I'd call records from my time at Merchiston. I do have report cards and school photographs. There would have been records in the school office, but we never saw them.

## **Lessons to be learned**

117. I was shown round the school five or six years ago. It was so different from the time I was there. A lot of this stuff has probably already changed. I don't know what the school is like nowadays, but is connected with the internet and mobile phones. I think the kids have a lot more freedom. I don't think the school would get away with a lot of the things that happened when I was there. It does make me a bit sad because the people that were responsible are either dead or it's finished, it's over.
118. It's a bit sad. It seems like it was this thing that we just got through. It's an amazingly privileged thing to go to boarding school. There's a book called *The Making of Them* by an English psychologist, Nick Duffell. It's about the psychological aspects of sending children to boarding schools. It's really interesting. The whole thing just strikes me as something that probably should never have happened.
119. I don't think kids should be sent to boarding schools because it's inherently harmful for their social-emotional development. I know it doesn't affect every child in the same way, but I personally feel there would have to be a pretty good reason to send a child to boarding school, such as risk issues or a military family. For an eleven year old child to be separated from their parents and possibly siblings is hugely traumatic in terms of attachment and can damage the child's sense of self and their ability to form close interpersonal relationships. There's a whole dimension to children's experiences that boarding school doesn't account for and which is ignored and minimised. Happiness, fulfilment, and success as an adult doesn't just depend on academic results and discipline. Nurturing and care within important attachment relationships, from non-paid care-givers, i.e. parents or at least consistent caregivers, plays a huge role.

### Hopes for the Inquiry

120. I hope that the Inquiry will give the staff in boarding schools and parents some understanding of what the children's experiences were like and what they went through, as opposed to what children were told that their experiences should have been. I also hope that it will bring into the open any abuse that did occur and that anybody involved in it is held accountable. Essentially, I hope that there will be a more rounded view of the boarding school experience that takes into account the view of those that went through it. I hope the Inquiry will give a more realistic view of what actually happened in boarding schools and some of the physical, emotional and verbal abuse that occurred and help shift the state of collective denial among many staff, parents, and ex-pupils of such schools. I also hope that for anybody who has actually gone through serious abuse, the Inquiry will validate their experiences and show them that they aren't alone.
121. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..........

Dated.....07 December 2020.....